

National POW/MIA



Recognition Day



September 18th, 2009 VA Chapel 1:00pm



Tomah VA Medical Center

Director’s Message

Today, we pay tribute to a very special group of Americans – Veterans whose service inspires awe and whose personal sacrifices demand our respect. On National POW/MIA Recognition Day, we honor all of America’s former prisoners of war and service members missing in action. How can we possibly thank those who have sacrificed so much on our behalf? America's former prisoners of war are among our nation's most revered heroes. They served with dignity and honor under the worst of human conditions – starvation, isolation, torture and the ever-present threat of death. And to the thousands of military families tormented by uncertainty due to the loss of loved ones whose whereabouts remain unknown, our hearts go out to you.

Since World War I, more than 142,000 American service members have been captured and imprisoned, more than 130,000 of them during World War II. Approximately 21,000 former prisoners of war are still alive.

The sheer number of Americans currently listed as missing in action – more than 78,000 from World War II, 8,140 from Korea, hundreds during the Cold War, and nearly 2,000 from Vietnam – is staggering. But America maintains its unwavering resolve to locate and identify its missing servicemen and women. Thus far in 2009, the remains of seven service members missing in action from the Korean War, three from World War II and one from the Vietnam War have been identified and returned. And just last month, the remains of a Navy pilot shot down in Iraq on the first night of Operation Desert Storm in 1991 who had been listed as “missing/captured” were identified and returned home.

Today is a solemn day - a day to pay tribute to the bravest of the brave. We are very honored to be able to fulfill one of the noblest missions of civil service. Thank you for attending today’s ceremony.

Jerald D. Molnar Medical Center Director

PRELUDE

INTRODUCTION

INVOCATION

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

“The National Anthem”

WELCOME

“He Ain’t Heavy, He’s my Brother”

GUEST SPEAKER

POW RECOGNITION

MIA TRIBUTE

“Let there be Peace on Earth”

BENEDICTION

RETIRING OF COLORS

POSTLUDE

Matt Nagle on Guitar

James Theres, Public Affairs Officer, Master of Ceremonies

Chaplain Ed Stigen

Necedah Veterans (AMVETS, VFW and, American Legion)

Tom Muench, MSSW Social Work, POW Coordinator

Assembly

Jerald D. Molnar, Medical Center Director

Steve Hensley

Kevin Hermening, United States Marine

Wendy Zellmer, Consult Tracking Clerk

Ruth Benzing, Supervisor, Ambulatory Care & Processing

Tom Muench, MSSW, Social Work Coordinator

With music by Matt Nagle on Guitar

Steve Hensley

Chaplain Ed Stigen

Necedah Veterans (AMVETS, VFW and, American Legion)

Matt Nagle on Guitar

In the center of a bronze medallion one and three eighths inches in diameter, an eagle is shown with its wings displayed. Forming a circle around the eagle and following the contour of the medal, barbed wire and bayonet points may be seen. The eagle is the American bald eagle and represents the United States in general and the individual prisoner of war in particular. It is standing "with pride and dignity, continually on the alert for the opportunity to seize hold of beloved freedom.'

The reverse has the inscription "AWARDED TO" around the top and "FOR HONORABLE SERVICE WHILE A PRISONER OF WAR" across the center in three lines with a space between the two inscriptions for engraving the name of the recipient. The shield of the Coat of Arms of the United States is centered on the lower part of the reverse side with the inscription "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" around the bottom of the medal.

Ribbon

The ribbon to the Prisoner of War Medal is 1 3/8 inches wide and consists of a central band of black edged in white. The edge stripes of the ribbon are composed of pinstripes of red, white and blue (with the red forming the outer edge of the ribbon). The red, white and blue edge stripes represent the United States; the larger white stripes represent hope, and the black center stripe alludes to the bleakness of confinement as a prisoner of war.

The POW Medal is authorized by Public Law 99-145, section 1128, title 10, United States Code (10 USC 1128), 8 November 1985, and is authorized for any person who, while serving in any capacity with the U.S. Armed Forces, was taken prisoner and held captive after 5 April 1917.

The POW Medal is to be issued only to those U.S. military personnel and other personnel granted creditable U.S. military service who were taken prisoner and held captive.

U.S. and foreign civilians who have been credited with U.S. military service which encompasses the period of captivity are also eligible for the medal. The Secretary of Defense authorized on January 27, 1990, the POW Medal for the Philippine Commonwealth Army and Recognized Guerrilla Unit Veterans who were



POW Medal

held captive between December 7, 1941, and September 26, 1945. DD Form 2510-1 (Prisoner of War Medal Application/Information-Philippine Commonwealth Army and Recognized Guerrilla Veterans) was developed as the application for Filipino Veterans who fit this category.

For purposes of this medal, past armed conflicts are defined as World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam Conflict, and Persian Gulf War. Hostages of terrorists and persons detained by governments with which the United States is not engaged actively in armed conflict are not eligible for the medal.

Any person convicted of misconduct or a criminal charge by a U.S. military tribunal, or who receives a less than honorable discharge based upon actions while a prisoner of war, or whose conduct was not in accord with the Code of Conduct, and whose actions are documented by U.S. military records is ineligible for the medal. The Secretary of the Army is the authority for deciding eligibility in such cases.

No more than one POW Medal will be awarded. For subsequent award of the medal, service stars will be awarded and worn on the suspension and service ribbon of the medal. A period of captivity terminates on return to U.S. military control. Escapees who do not return to U.S. military control and are recaptured by an enemy do not begin a new period of captivity for subsequent award of the POW Medal.

The POW Medal may be awarded posthumously.

The primary next of kin of eligible prisoners of war who die in captivity may be issued the POW Medal regardless of the length of stay in captivity.

Personnel officially classified as MIA are not eligible for award of the POW Medal. The POW Medal will only be awarded when the individuals prisoner of war status has been officially confirmed and recognized as such by the Department of the Army. Likewise, the return of remains, in and of itself, does not constitute evidence of confirmed prisoner of war status.

All requests for the POW Medal will be initiated by eligible former POWs, or their next of kin, using a personal letter or DD form 2510.

Our Honored POW Guests

Clifford D. Armgard	Europe	Clyde W. Nicholls	Germany
Howard M. Jones	Germany	Steve Pappas	Germany
Russell Lewis	Germany	Robert R. Storandt	Austria
George Marshall	Germany	Henry C. Wittenberg	Germany
Philip J. Muth	Germany	Edward Wojahn	Germany

Former Prisoners Of War

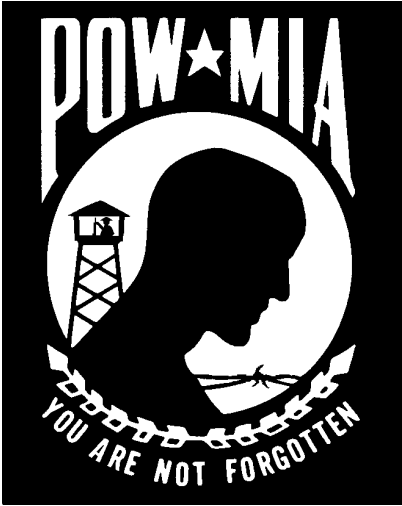
Former American prisoners of war (POWs) are eligible for special veterans benefits, including enrollment in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care for treatment in VA hospitals and clinics without copayments as well as disability compensation for injuries and diseases that have been associated with internment. These benefits are in addition to regular veterans benefits and services to which they, as veterans, are entitled.

	Captured and Interned	Died while POW	Returned to U.S. Military Control	Refused to Return	Alive at end of 2007
<i>GRAND TOTAL</i>	142,246	17,009	125,214	21	22,649
WW I	4,120	147	3,973	--	--
WW II	130,201	14,072	116,129	--	20,327
Korean	7,140	2,701	4,418	21	1,739
Vietnam	725	64	661	--	550
Gulf War	47	25	21	--	21
Somalia	1	--	1	--	1
Kosovo	3	--	3	--	3
Iraq	9	--	8	--	8

(Congress defined a prisoner of war as a person who, while serving on active duty, was forcibly detained by an enemy government or a hostile force, during a period of war or in situations comparable to war.)

In 1971, Mrs. Michael Hoff, an MIA wife and member of the National League of Families, recognized the need for a symbol of our POW/MIAs. Prompted by an article in the Jacksonville, Florida Times-Union, Mrs. Hoff contacted Norman Rivkees, Vice President of Annin & Company which had made a banner for the newest member of the United Nations, the People's Republic of China, as a part of their policy to provide flags to all United Nations members states. Mrs. Hoff found Mr. Rivkees very sympathetic to the POW/MIA issue, and he, along with Annin's advertising agency, designed a flag to represent our missing men. Following League approval, the flags were manufactured for distribution. On March 9, 1989, an official League flag, which flew over the White House on 1988 National POW/MIA Recognition Day, was installed in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda as a result of legislation passed overwhelmingly during the 100th Congress. In a demonstration of bipartisan Congressional support, the leadership of both Houses hosted the installation ceremony. The League's POW/MIA flag is the only flag ever displayed in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda where it will stand as a powerful symbol of national commitment to America's POW/MIAs until the fullest possible accounting has been achieved for U.S. personnel still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.

On August 10, 1990, the 101st Congress passed U.S. Public Law 101-355, which recognized the League's POW/MIA flag and designated it *"as the symbol of our Nation's concern and commitment to resolving as fully as possible the fates of Americans still prisoner, missing and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, thus ending the uncertainty for their families and the Nation"*. The importance of the League's POW/MIA flag lies in its continued visibility, a constant reminder of the plight of America's POW/MIAs. Other than "Old Glory", the League's POW/MIA flag is the only flag ever to fly over the White House, having been displayed in this place of honor on National POW/MIA Recognition Day since 1982. With passage of Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act during the first term of the 105th Congress, the League's POW/MIA flag will fly each year on Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day and Veterans Day on the grounds or in the public lobbies of major military installations as designated by the Secretary of the Defense, all Federal national cemeteries, the national Korean War Veterans Memorial, the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the White House, the United States Postal Service post offices and at the official offices of the Secretaries of State, Defense and Veteran's Affairs, and Director of the Selective Service System.





Kevin Hermening was a 20-year-old Marine Corps guard stationed at the American Embassy in Tehran when a group of Iranian militants stormed the 27-acre compound Nov. 4, 1979. On that day, he earned a designation that changed his life: He was the youngest of 52 American hostages held captive in Iran for 444 exhausting days

“Over the course of the entire 444 days, I was outside in the fresh air and sunshine for a whopping two hours,” Hermening says. As a result, he now spends as much time as possible outdoors. “When you're denied that for 14 and a half months, it really becomes important.

During his captivity, Hermening was shuttled among residential buildings in the embassy compound, a maximum-security prison in downtown Tehran and an abandoned house in northeastern Iran. He spent most of his time sleeping, as much as 20 hours a day, in an attempt to escape the reality of his situation.

In early 1980 while at the abandoned house, he tried to escape. But those plans were thwarted when suspicious guards searched his room and discovered cash, a road map, telephone numbers and extra clothes he had stashed. He spent the following 43 days in solitary confinement.

Kevin Hermening celebrated his 21st birthday as a hostage in Iran two decades ago. “I have a much greater appreciation for freedom and our country,” he says.

“The only thing in that room was a box spring with no mattress,” he remembers. At first, he handled the isolation fairly well. “After all, I was a 20-year-old Marine. I was invincible,” he says. “But after 40 days of wondering, ‘Has the situation ended? Am I the last one here?’ it started to wear on my mind, my soul and my body.”

Unknown to Hermening at the time, the United States launched an unsuccessful attempt to rescue him and the other hostages on April 24, 1980. Nine American soldiers died during the attempt when their helicopters crashed in a blinding sandstorm.

“We have been referred to as heroes,” Hermening says. “The real heroes were the nine servicemen who gave their lives trying to set us free. They and their families are the ones who paid the ultimate price. We were the lucky ones. We got out.”

Hermening's last few weeks of imprisonment were spent in a swanky hotel in Tehran. “That was an effort to make us forget all the bad stuff that happened,” he says, with a laugh.

The Iranian Hostage Crisis ended Jan. 20, 1981, the same day Ronald Reagan was inaugurated as president.

“The American people can be assured that the Americans who were held hostage in Iran represented them well,” Hermening says. “They stood up for what was right, and they didn't let anyone down.”

Name: Michael Scott Speicher
Rank at Loss/Branch: Lt. Cdr./US Navy
Rank in 2002: Commander
Unit: USS SARATOGA
Age at Loss: 33
Born: July 12, 1957
Home City of Record: Jacksonville FL
Date of Loss: 17 January 1991
Original Status: Missing in Action



Mystery Ends: Pilot's Remains Found In Iraq Desert

Captain Michael 'Scott' Speicher Shot Down Over Iraq Desert During Gulf War

Remains Identified as Navy Captain Michael Scott Speicher

The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) has positively identified remains recovered in Iraq as those of Captain Michael Scott Speicher. Captain Speicher was shot down flying a combat mission in an F/A-18 Hornet over west-central Iraq on January 17th, 1991 during Operation Desert Storm.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with Captain Speicher's family for the ultimate sacrifice he made for his country," said Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy. "I am also extremely grateful to all those who have worked so tirelessly over the last 18 years to bring Captain Speicher home."

"Our Navy will never give up looking for a shipmate, regardless of how long or how difficult that search may be," said Admiral Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations. "We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Captain Speicher and his family for the sacrifice they have made for our nation and the example of strength they have set for all of us."

Acting on information provided by an Iraqi citizen in early July, US Marines stationed in Al Anbar Province went to a location in the desert which was believed to be the crash site of Captain Speicher's jet. The Iraqi citizen stated he knew of two Iraqi citizens who recalled an American jet impacting the desert and the remains of the pilot being buried in the desert. One of these Iraqi citizens stated that they were present when Captain Speicher was found dead at the crash site by Bedouins and his remains buried. The Iraqi citizens led US Marines to the site who searched the area. Remains were recovered over several days during the past week and flown to Dover Air Force Base for scientific identification by the AFIP's Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner.

The recovered remains include bones and multiple skeletal fragments. Positive identification was made by comparing Captain Speicher's dental records with the jawbone recovered at the site. The teeth are a match, both visually and radiographically.

While dental records have confirmed the remains to be those of Captain Speicher, the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology DNA Lab in Rockville, Maryland is running DNA tests on the remains recovered in Iraq and comparing them to DNA reference samples previously provided by family members.